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Operation CROCODILE: Facilitating Peace and Preventing Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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By: Kaitlin Buttrum, Canadian Joint Operations Command

On Operation CROCODILE, members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are working to help bring peace to the volatile region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Currently, there are nine Canadian Armed Forces members serving in important leadership, planning, and liaison roles on this mission. Colonel Pierre Huet is the Task Force Commander for Operation CROCODILE, and also serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations and Plans for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in Goma. In this latter role, he is responsible for the planning, execution, and coordination of all military operations in the DRC.

Canadians deployed on Operation CROCODILE are providing much needed advice, support, and knowledge to the nations involved with MONUSCO. Although a small group, the Canadians deployed on this mission bring a lot to the table.

“The Canadian contribution has a significant impact on the mission because of our varied experience and education,” says Colonel Huet. “Our willingness to work hard and our can-do attitude make a big difference with the mission.”

One of the Canadian contingent's main tasks is liaising with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), offering mentorship and planning assistance to their forces. In the DRC, MONUSCO operations are conducted against armed groups on a monthly or even weekly basis, keeping the Canadian forces very busy with liaising and planning.

Over the course of this operation, the drive and determination of the CAF members and their partners from diverse nations has led to many successes and noteworthy moments.

In July 2016, Colonel Huet assisted with the extraction of more than 750 South Sudanese people who were under threat in the jungles of the DRC. They now reside in the safe custody of UN force in Goma, DRC.

During his tour on Operation CROCODILE, Colonel Huet has been working to implement two operating concepts that have been approved by the Force Commander and the FARDC. These concepts are currently under development and testing for future use.

The first, Concept Weaponize, regulates how the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade conducts offensive and targeted operations against armed groups in the DRC. The second is the Combat Liaison Support Team. This concept will form small teams of soldiers who will mentor the

commanders of the FARDC. Mainly, they will assist the FARDC with the execution and planning of missions at the formation headquarters level.

“Canadian Armed Forces members are working to strengthen the Congolese army,” says Colonel Huet. “By providing our experience and expertise to them, we will help them to grow and learn as an organization, making them more efficient on the ground.”

Operation CROCODILE is Canada’s military contribution to MONUSCO. This mission aims to protect civilians, facilitate peacebuilding, and prevent armed conflict in the DRC. Initiated in 1999 under the rubric of MONUC, and later rebranded as MONUSCO in 2010, the mission draws on the support of approximately 17 000 soldiers from 54 nations worldwide.

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